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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 IRAN RPO DUBAI 000016

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SUBJECT: IRAN'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS

REF: A) IRPO DUBAI 0012; B) IRPO DUBAI 0014

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CLASSIFIED BY: Jillian L. Burns, Director, Iran Regional
Presence Office, Dubai, UAE.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

1.(S/NF) Summary: A purported former IRGC general and an Iranian doctor who is reportedly very close to the regime, discussed Iran's external affairs in separate meetings with IRPO Director. One said Iran is "begging" for relations with the US and that the US and Iran can come to an agreement, but only if it agrees to disagree on some issues. Antipathy towards Israel runs far deeper than antipathy towards the US, and one source claims "all" Iranians believe Israel would use a nuclear weapon against Iran in a first strike. While the doctor says it was a mistake for Iran to fund terrorist groups, he maintains it cannot abandon them now or risk losing honor. The general says Iran can do a lot more to monitor the Iran-Iraq border and that US and Iran can come to terms on Iraq prior to reaching a broader resolution of issues. End summary

2.(S/NF) A purported former IRGC general and an Iranian doctor who is reportedly very close to conservative circles in Iran, discussed Iran's external affairs. Both were introduced to IRPO Director in separate meetings by a longstanding Iranian-American contact. Their comments on the IRGC, the Basij, and Ansar-e Hizballah, as well as the nuclear and domestic situation are reported in reftels.

US-Iran relations

3.(S/NF) The doctor said he does not see US-Iran conflict as inevitable and can envision friendly negotiations in mutual respect with the US, but he does not think complete resolution of all issues possible, saying both sides would need to agree to differ on some issues. That said, he claimed Iran's relations with the US would improve if the US reduced its support for Israel. The doctor claimed Iran is "begging" for relations with the US, but individuals within the government are wary of advocating such steps, afraid of getting burned. He claimed that 70% of Iranians openly support relations with the US and a further 20% want relations but are too nervous to admit it publicly. In his view, Iran is better off dealing with the US

than with Syria, because Iranians "can't trust Syrians," saying they break their word.

Israel

4.(S/NF) The doctor maintained that "all" Iranians believe Israel would use nuclear weapons against them in a first strike. (His views on the Iranian nuclear issue are reported in ref B.) When asked why not try to resolve the bilateral issues between Iran and Israel, he replied that while he can envision negotiations with the US, negotiations with Israel are "inconceivable."

5.(S/NF) The doctor also repeated a frequently heard claim that the Israeli government currently has influence within the Iranian government. He accused Israel of deliberately creating discord within the IRIG, to "divide and conquer." For instance, he said, when high levels make a decision, but lower levels of government interfere with implementation, that's the work of the Israelis. The doctor maintained, without explaining, that President Ahmadinejad's motivation for staging the conference on the Holocaust was to counter Israeli influence inside the Iranian government.

6.(S/NF) The former general, when asked about the issues between Iran and Israel, cited Iran's historically good relations with Jews, claiming it was instead Arabs and Jews who were always in conflict. He maintained that the onus was now on Israel to build trust about its long-term intentions. Iranians believe that Israel wants to expand its territory from the Nile in Egypt to the Furat river in Iraq, he claimed.

7.(S/NF) When asked about the source of antagonism with Israel, the general said there were a few issues that penetrated the revolution that were not "natural." He blamed the influence of Palestinians who prior to the revolution trained Iranian revolutionary fighters in Lebanon. After seizing power, those Iranians were sympathetic to Palestinians, he said. Some of

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these Palestinian protigis went on to establish the IRGC. Iranians later broke with the PLO when Arafat supported Saddam Hussein, but he claimed that sympathy for Palestinians endured within this group. (He also said the same thing happened with communists in Iran. Communists took part in the revolution but were later "killed off." Nonetheless, Marxist economic thinking prevailed, resulting in an economy that is "70%" state controlled.)

Support for terrorist groups

8.(S/NF) One of the issues the doctor felt could not be resolved initially in any negotiations with the US would be Iran's support for Hizballah. He said Iran cannot withdraw support for groups like Hizballah and Hamas, a matter of honor. Firstly, Iran sees itself as the champion for Shia, and secondly, links to such groups gives Iran a role in the region. He said Iranian support for Hizballah is partially a response to current realities, but partially a future investment in case Israel tries again to occupy Lebanese territory. That said, he accepted that Hizballah's pretext of Shebaa Farms as a justification for fighting Israel was weak.

9.(S/NF) The doctor freely admitted that Iranians do not like the fact that Iran sends money to Palestinian groups. He claimed that 95% Iranians don't care about Palestinians and said Arafat was called a "prostitute" in Iran. In his view, funding these groups (Note: it was not clear if he was including Hizballah. Endnote) was a mistake from the beginning, but he maintained it would be too costly in terms of honor for Iran to abandon them now. He drew a parallel to the American situation in Iraq, claiming that the US now "knows" that invading Iraq was a mistake but believes the costs of walking away would be too high.

Sunni extremism

10.(S/NF) The general called Sunni extremism Iran's biggest enemy. The doctor claimed Sunni extremists hate Shia more than they hate the US and said Al-Qaida had burned Iran. Although the doctor did not clarify whether he was speaking with any degree of knowledge, he said that after Iran had treated Al-Qaida with a degree of tolerance, allowing passage and treating those under house arrest well, Al-Qaida paid back Iran with its statements against Shia.

Iraq

11.(S/NF) The doctor maintained that Iran "has to be" present in Iraq to support Shia as a matter of honor. He claimed that "80%" of Iranian activities in Iraq are not related to violence. Furthermore, he said, it is not in Iran's interest to end up in conflict with the US there.

12.(S/NF) The general claimed to know the Iran-Iraq border well from his war experience and said Iran can do a lot more to monitor the border. In his opinion, US and Iran can come to an agreement on Iraq issues prior to resolving bilateral issues, but that discussions behind the scenes between intelligence agencies were more important than diplomatic meetings.

Regional relations

13.(S/NF) The former general repeated the claim often heard from Iranians that Persian Gulf countries are not actually afraid of Iran, that these countries lie to the US to get US assistance. When asked about Saudi concerns that Iran may try to stir up unrest in the Saudi Shia population, he dismissed the notion and instead accused Saudi religious elements of working with Pakistani intelligence to stir up the Baloch population.

14.(S/NF) When asked about March 5, 2007 Sunday Telegraph story in which a former Iranian consul general to Dubai claimed to disclose intelligence activities of the consulate and contingency plans for attacks in Dubai in case of Israeli or US attacks, he said he had no knowledge of the claims. He said only that he would not be surprised if Hizballah is funded from Dubai. He maintained that "all" such groups have some kind of

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presence here and claimed that Usama bin Ladin owns a shopping center in Dubai. In any case, he doubted Iran would order attacks in Dubai, given the role it plays as Iran's economic window to the world.

BURNS